

Erzsebet Bato



This is my mother, Erzsebet Illes, at the seaside in Abbazia. My mother was born in Budapest in 1899. She drew beautifully and was accepted into the Academy of Applied Arts, but then she met my father while still very young, married, and left the Academy. My parents later divorced. As far back as I can remember, my mother went to synagogue every Friday. She couldn't read Hebrew, but was a very good Jew. My mother was the director of a hospice for old women. It was established when millionaire women, all Buda Jews, made up their minds to buy a villa, which my mother had renovated to create a hospice. In 1945, she opened an orphanage instead of reopening the home for the elderly. There were masses of Jewish orphans. Those girls all learned a trade.

Those who were school-age went to school; those who were too young went to kindergarten. She also turned a private flat into a synagogue. In 1950, the wave of nationalization reached the villa. When the Jewish orphanage was kicked out of the building, it got another site. And my mother arranged everything there, started all over again. The whole group of them, including Mother, moved there.